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EXCALIBUR

PHOENIX
RETURNS
'NUFF SAID!



Alan Davis/Editor

THE POWERFUL CAPTAIN BRITAIN, THE SHAPE-CHANGING MEGGAN, THE INTANGIBLE SHADOWCAT, THE TELEPORTING NIGHTCRAWLER, THE MYSTERIOUS PHOENIX, THE EVER-UNPREDICTABLE WIDGET AND LOCKHEED THE DRAGON FORGED IN THE FIRES OF THEIR TRAGIC PASTS. THEY HAVE Banded TOGETHER TO FIGHT A MODERN DAY CRUSADE AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL! STAN LEE PRESENTS...

IN THE GOLD INTERSTELLAR GULF BETWEEN DISTANT STARS, AN ENTITY OF SINGULAR UNIQUENESS SOARS.

THE FRAIL MORTAL FORM IS THAT OF RACHEL SUMMERS.

A NATIVE OF PLANET EARTH WHOSE SHATTERED SPIRITUAL BEING-- BOTH MIND AND SOUL -- ARE CURRENTLY COGGED IN THE HEALING EMBRACE OF THE PHOENIX FORCE.

THIS ENIGMATIC AVATAR-- A CELESTIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS OLD AS CREATION-- FORSOOK GODHOOD IN SEARCH OF PURPOSE...

... A REASON FOR BEING.

TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCE

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ANSWERS ELUDED
THE PHOENIX
WHEN IT FIRST
ADOPTED A
HUMAN GUISE.

IT HAD RE-
GARDED MAN
WITH LOFTY
DISDAIN AND
WAS SEDUCED
BY DARK
EMOTIONS.

BUT NOW, AS IT
RELINQUISHES COSMIC
AWARENESS TO FOCUS
THROUGH RACHEL'S PRIMI-
TIVE ORGANIC SENSES, IT
GLIMPSES A TRUTH.

IN SEEING
ALL NOTHING
IS SEEN.

A FLAWLESS OVERVIEW
OF CREATION REVEALS
THE MAJESTY OF A
GRAND DESIGN, BUT IT
IS STERILE.



IT IGNORES THE
SUBTLE MYSTERY
AND SIMPLE
BEAUTY OF
EXISTENCE.

OF VIRGIN
STARLIGHT
AGAINST
SHIMMERING
INFINITY.



... OF FROZEN
METHANE
LACED WITH
GOLD.

... AND OF THE
LIMITLESS
VARIETY OF
ORGANIC LIFE.

FROM THE VALIANT
SOULS OF MAN
STRIVING FOR THE
HEAVENS...

... TO THE PHOTOSYNTHETIC
BLADDERS OF ORGANIC GAS
THAT DANCE ACROSS THE
ICY PLANET BELOW IN PUR-
SUIT OF RADIANT WARMTH
FROM AN ANCIENT SUN.



A SUN THAT
SEEMS SUDDENLY
DIM AS A NEW
INTENSE LIGHT
RISES ON THE
HORIZON.

WHAT IS THIS?
IT IS NO NATURAL
PHENOMENON.

CORROSIVE
ENERGY DISSOLVING
THE PLANET
SURFACE--AM I
UNDER ATTACK?

NO. THE BEAM
EATS THROUGH
TO THE PLANETARY
CORE--DRAINING
ITS LIFE-FORCE.

I RECOGNIZE
THIS HUNGRY
OBSCENITY.

...AND THE
MACHINE
FROM WHICH IT
ISSUES.

AND I
KNOW ITS
ARCHITECT.





THIS FROZEN WORLD
LOST ITS ATMOSPHERE
A MILLENNIUM AGO, SO
THERE IS NO SOUND AS
THE COSMIC CONVERTOR
IS VAPORIZED BY THE
EXPLOSIVE ENERGY IT
SOUGHT TO CONTAIN.

FORGIVE ME, GALACTUS. I DESIRED ONLY TO SAVE THIS LIVING ORG, NOT THE DESTRUCTION OF YOUR MACHINE.

CEASE YOUR PRATTLE.

I AM WHO I AM.

I DO WHAT I MUST TO SURVIVE.

WHILE YOU, CHASE-BRINGER OF OLD FBIS, SUPERIOR MORALITY AS YOU PARADE IN STOLEN HUMANITY.

I AM WEAK, CONSUMED BY HUNGER.

YOUR INTRUSION HAS GOST ME DEARLY.

...AND YOU WILL PAY THE PRICE.

YOUR OBSCENE APPETITE HAS INITIATED THIS HOSTILITY, GALACTUS. I SOUGHT TO AVOID CONFLICT.

BUT MY CAUSE IS JUST AND I WILL FIGHT YOU TO THE DEATH.

LIGHT YEARS AWAY
ON PLANET EARTH...

... ANOTHER BATTLE
RAGES IN THE CIRCUIT-
ENCRUSTED CAVERN
BENEATH BRIMDOCK
MANOR.

KURT, IF YOU WERE
NOT PROTECTED BY
THE SOLID LIGHT
ARMOR I AM GENER-
ATING, BRIAN'S
LAST PUNCH WOULD
HAVE TAKEN YOUR
HEAD OFF.

JA!
THANK YOU,
GERISE--
OOOFT!

YOU HAVE
OVEREXTENDED,
BRIAN.

ALLOWING ME
TO CATCH YOUR
STRIKING FOOT...

... AND SWEEP
YOUR STANDING
LEG.

ONCE DOWN,
YOU ARE AN
EASY TARGET
FOR--

YES ?!

THIS IS THE POINT
WHERE YOU'RE MEANT
TO SAY HOW UNBELIEV-
ABLY FAST I AM FOR
A PERSON WITH MY
MASSIVE PHYSIQUE.

UNFT!
TAKING IT AS SAID...

...BUT REMEMBER,
I AM FASTER.

I DON'T LIKE
THIS, KITTY.
WHY MUST THEY
FIGHT?

TRAINING IS ALWAYS
IMPORTANT, MEGAN.
AND NOW THAT BRIAN
HAS ACCEPTED HIS
HERITAGE -- AS A
WARRIOR OF OTHER-
WORLD --

-- HE'S PREPARED TO ENHANCE
HIS BRUTE STRENGTH WITH
MARTIAL TECHNIQUE.

BUT THEY
COULD HURT
EACH OTHER!

NAH! THE LIGHT
SUIT GIVES KURT
A LEVEL OF PROTECTION
EQUAL TO BRIAN'S.

...AND HE'S NEAR
INVULNERABLE."

BRIAN!

OH,
BRIAN.
HE'S NOT
MOVING.

CERISE, GET ME
OUT OF THIS --
WHAT WENT
WRONG?!

NOTHING. THE BLOW
YOU STRUCK WAS WELL
BELOW THE LEVEL OF
CAPTAIN BRIAN'S
ENDURANCE.

OH KURT,
IS HE BADLY
HURT?

NEIN. PULSE
IS STRONG.
BREATHING
REGULAR.

I THINK HE
IS REGAINING
CONSCIOUSNESS.



BRIAN?

I'M OKAY,
JUST A BIT
WEAK... TIRED



I HAVEN'T
BEEN SLEEPING
LATELY.

I CAN'T STOP
THINKING ABOUT
FINDING SAT-YR-4--
MAKING HER PAY
FOR KILLING
COURTNEY.



NOTHING
ELSE SEEMS
TO MATTER
ANYMORE.



WELL, GO
AND FIND HER
THEN!

MEGGAN?



MEGGAN,
WAIT...

I DIDN'T
MEAN...

...MEGGAN?!

LET HER GO,
BRIAN. GIVE HER
A MOMENT. SHE
WILL UNDER-
STAND.



I DON'T KNOW, KURT,
SHE'S BEEN VERY
TOUGHLY LATELY.

PERHAPS, BRIAN,
BECAUSE YOU HAVE
BEEN IGNORING
HER.

NO. I'VE JUST
BEEN PREOCCUPIED
WITH TRYING TO
FIND SOME TRACE
OF SAT-YR-4--
MEGGAN KNOWS
I LOVE HER.



HOW DOES
SHE KNOW?
LOVE NEEDS
TO BE EX-
RESSED,
NURTURED.

BRIAN, I CAN
UNDERSTAND
THE RAGE THAT
DRIVES YOU TO
AVENGE COURTNEY
ROSE.

BUT IT HAS
BECOME AN
OBSESSION.
IT WILL
CONSUME
YOU.

YOU MUST
DECIDE, MY
FRIEND-- IS
CAPTURING
SAT-YR-4 WORTH
LOSING MEGGAN?



MEANWHILE...

EARTH...

BROADCASTING
HOUSE, LONDON.
RESIDENCE OF
BRITAIN'S TOP
RADIO STATION,
RADIO ONE...

...AND ITS PREMIER
P.O., SCOTT WRIGHT.

I HEARD YOU
SHOW THIS
AFTERNOON,
SCOTTY BOY,
YOU WAS REALLY
COOKIN'.

YEAH,
REMEMBER
THAT WHEN
YOU BID TO
RENEW MY
CONTRACT.

AW, SCOTT,
YOU'RE NOT
GONNA BE
DIFFICULT,
ARE YOU?

WHAT CAN I SAY,
SID, T.V. CALLS
I'M HOT. THE
PEOPLE LOVE
ME.

AND WHO
CAN BLAME
THEM?

I SAY, A LADY
OF EXQUISITE
TASTE... AND
INTRIGUING
DRESS SENSE.

I'M YOUR
CHAUFFEUR,
SIR.

CHAUFFEUR?

TO DRIVE YOU TO
YOUR 5 O'CLOCK
AT 8TV TELEVISION.

THEY SENT A
CAR-- THEY LOVE
ME.

OF COURSE, "MR.
RIGHT." NOW IF
YOU'D CARE TO
FOLLOW ME--

ANYWHERE,
BABY.

HEY, SCOTT.
WE NEED TO
TALK.

SORRY, SID, I
HAVE TO MEET MY
T.V. PEOPLE.

AND, WHEN BUSINESS
IS CONCLUDED, MY
DEAR "DRIVER" MAYBE
I COULD INTEREST
YOU IN A LITTLE--

WHAT GIVES?
THE CARPARK
LIGHTS ARE
OUT--

MUST BE A
SHORT-CIRCUIT,
SIR. THE CAR'S
RIGHT HERE
THOUGH.

SCOTT, BABY.
CALL ME SCOTT.

NOW, AS I WAS
SAYING, HOW
ABOUT A LITTLE
LATE NIGHT--

I REALLY
DON'T THINK
YOU'LL BE
FREE, "SCOTT
BABY"...





EARTH...

THE CAVERN
BENEATH BROADDOCK
MANOR...

WHEN BRIAN ORIGINALLY
LEFT THE MANOR, THE
MASTERMIND COMPUTER--
ALL OF THIS ORGANIC
CIRCUITRY-- WAS STILL
OPERATIONAL.

I WANT TO FIND
OUT WHAT CAUSED
IT TO SHUT DOWN.

NOW THAT I'VE
EXPLAINED WHY WE'RE
HERE, PERRY, WOULD
YOU PLEASE RUN THESE
CABLES TO THE YELLOW
TERMINALS?

NO. SERVICE
TASKS ARE
UNWORTHY OF MY
ABILITY.

DID NOT YOUR
ADOPTED FAMILY,
THE K-HEN, MURTURE
YOU IN THE SAME
MANNER.

DON'T
YOU DARE
COMPARE...

I WASN'T...

...I...
YOU...
YOU'RE
RIGHT.

I DO NOT BELIEVE
MY GUARDIAN
SUGGESTED I SHOULD
REMAIN HERE FOR
THIS.

HE DID, BROTHER FRANCIS
WANTS YOU TO BE INTE-
GRATED INTO OUR
SOCIETY-- TO LIVE IN
THE REAL WORLD.

LORD KNOWS WHY
JUST AGRED TO
TAKE YOU ON. I
THINK IT'S A BIG
MISTAKE.

ON THAT
WE AGREE.

YEAH! WELL, YOU'RE
AN OBNOXIOUS JERK.
WHAT WOULD YOU
KNOW?

THOSE OLD MONKS
PAMPERED AND
PROTECTED YOU
SINCE YOU WERE
BORN.

THEY LET YOU
THINK YOU WERE
SOMETHING
SPECIAL.

I NEVER THOUGHT OF IT
BEFORE. PETER, ORORO,
LOGAN, SCOTT-- THEY
TREATED ME LIKE THEIR
EQUAL.

BUT, AT THE SAME TIME,
THEY WERE GUIDING
AND PROTECTING ME. I
WAS A REAL MUTANT
NINJA SUPER-BRAT, TOO.

I KNEW IT WAS SO.
MY MIND IS SUPERIOR.
THAT IS WHY I WILL
NOT SOIL MY HANDS
IN YOUR SERVICE.

WRONG, SUCKO!
NOW MOVE THOSE
CABLES OR I'LL
HAVE LOCKHEED
SING YOUR LITTLE
BUTT.

SENTINELS...



MEANWHILE...



BARTH...

THE BRADDOCK SUMMER
COTTAGE ON ENGLAND'S
SOUTH COAST...

TAG!

CHEAT. YOU
SAID YOU'D
GIVE ME A
HEAD START.

YOU GAVE
YOURSELF GILLS
AND WEBBED
FEET. I NEEDED
AN ADVANTAGE.

ANYWAY,
ALL'S FAIR
IN LOVE AND
WAR.

OH, BRIAN, I'M
SO HAPPY. IT'S
BEEN SO LONG
SINCE WE'VE BEEN
TOGETHER LIKE
THIS.

I WISH WE
COULD STAY
FOR MORE THAN
A WEEK.

IT WOULD
BE NICE. BUT
WE HAVE
OBLIGATIONS.

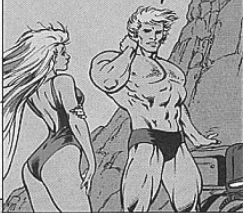
PLEASE,
BRIAN. DON'T
SPOIL IT.

I'M SORRY, MEGGAN. I
TRULY WISH THERE WAS
SOME OTHER WAY. I WISH
I WAS AN ORDINARY MAN.
BUT I'M NOT. I AM
CAPTAIN BRITAIN.

FOR YEARS I TRIED
TO DENY IT--AND I
HATED MYSELF.
NOW, I KNOW WHAT
I AM... WHO I AM.

I'VE ACCEPTED MYSELF... CAN YOU ACCEPT ME? I MEAN... I'M NOT REALLY DIFFERENT--

LORD, THIS IS DIFFICULT... I'VE BEEN TRYING TO PLUCK UP THE COURAGE TO SAY THIS FOR THE LAST TWO DAYS.



MEGGAN, I HAVE A DUTY-- WITHOUT IT I'M HALFA PERSON--



BUT I CAN'T CONCEIVE OF LIVING WITHOUT YOU--

-- I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT-- PLEASE SIT DOWN.

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY-- AND I'LL UNDERSTAND IF YOU DECLINE--

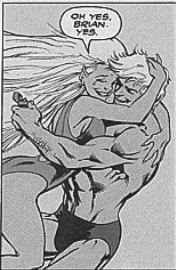


-- IS, I'D BE HONORED IF YOU WOULD CONSENT TO BECOMING MY WIFE.



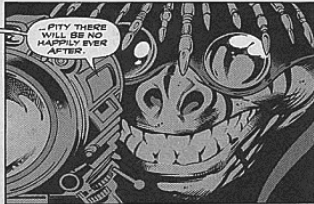
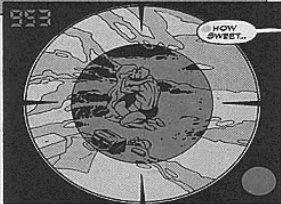
MEGGAN, WILL YOU MARRY ME?

OH YES, BRIAN. YES.



HOW SWEET...

...PITY THERE WILL BE NO HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

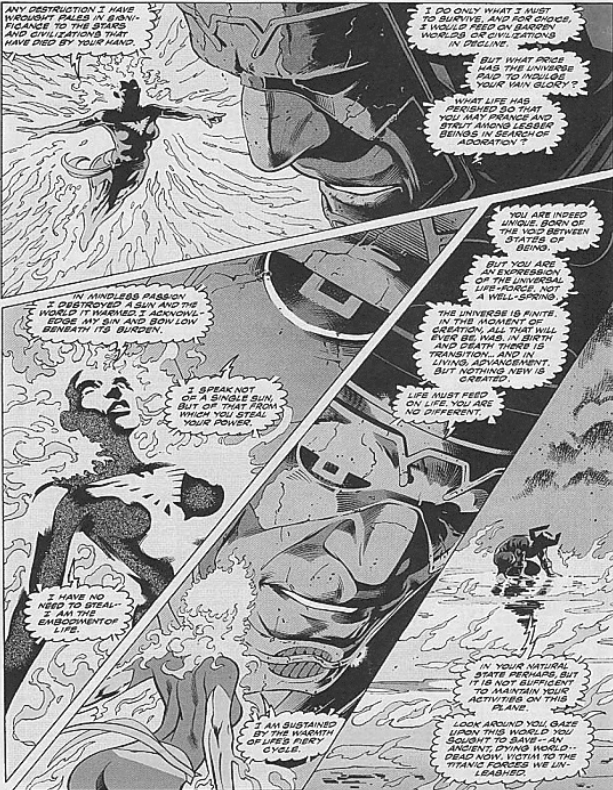


MEANWHILE...

YOU HAVE NOT
THE STRENGTH TO
CONTINUE THIS
CONFLICT, GALAG-
TUS.

LET IT END.
RENOUNCE YOUR
EVIL WAYS.

SPARE ME YOUR
HYPOCRISY. THE
STENCH OF DEATH
CLINGS TO YOU NO
LESS THAN TO ME.



ANY DESTRUCTION I HAVE
WROUGHT FALES IN SIGNI-
FICANCE TO THE STARS
AND CIVILIZATIONS THAT
HAVE DIED BY YOUR HAND.

I DO ONLY WHAT I MUST
TO SURVIVE, AND FOR CHOICE,
I WOULD FEED ON BARREN
WORLDS OR CIVILIZATIONS
IN DECLINE.

BUT WHAT PRICE
HAS THE UNIVERSE
PAID TO INDULGE
YOUR VAIN GLORY?

WHAT LIFE HAS
PERISHED SO THAT
YOU MAY PRANCE AND
STRETCH AMONG LESSER
BEINGS IN SEARCH OF
ADORATION?

YOU ARE INDEED
UNIQUE, BORN OF
THE VOID BETWEEN
STATES OF
BEING.

BUT YOU ARE
AN EXPRESSION
OF THE UNIVERSAL
LIFE-FORCE, NOT
A WELL-SPRING.

THE UNIVERSE IS FINITE.
IN THE MOMENT OF
CREATION, ALL THAT WILL
EVER BE, WAS, IN BIRTH
AND DEATH THERE IS
TRANSITION... AND IN
LIVING, ADVANCEMENT.
BUT NOTHING NEW IS
CREATED.

LIFE MUST FEED
ON LIFE, YOU ARE
NO DIFFERENT.

IN MINDLESS PASSION
I DESTROYED A SUN AND THE
WORLD IT NURTURED. I ACKNOWL-
EDGE MY SIN AND BOW LOW
BENEATH ITS BURDEN.

I SPEAK NOT
OF A SINGLE SUN,
BUT OF THAT FROM
WHICH YOU STEAL
YOUR POWER.

I HAVE NO
NEED TO STEAL--
I AM THE
EMBODIMENT OF
LIFE.

I AM SUSTAINED
BY THE WARMTH
OF LIFE'S FIERY
CYCLE.

IN YOUR NATURAL
STATE PERHAPS, BUT
IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT
TO MAINTAIN YOUR
ACTIVITIES ON THIS
PLANE.

LOOK AROUND YOU, GAZE
UPON THIS WORLD YOU
SOUGHT TO SAVE-- AN
ANCIENT, DYING WORLD--
DEAD NOW, VICTIM TO THE
TITANIC FORCES WE UN-
LEASHED.



AND I HOVER
NEAR TO DEATH,
MY STRENGTH
DEPLETED—EX-
HAUSTED IN
OUR STRUGGLE.

...THE SEA
OF LIFE YET
UNBORN.

...WHILE YOU ARE
NEITHER HEAVY NOR
HUNGRY BECAUSE
YOU TAP INTO A
SOURCE OF NEAR
LIMITLESS
POTENTIAL...

WHO IS THE
GREATER
EVIL, STAR-
CHILD?

...I, THE
DISPOSER OF
LIFE THAT
HAS RUN ITS
COURSE...

...OR YOU,
WHO DENIES
EXISTENCE TO
GENERATIONS
OF THE FUTURE?

SENSING GALACTUS HAS
SPOKEN THE TRUTH, THE
PHOENIX IS ENGLUFED
IN A COLD EMPTINESS.



IT STANDS IN SILENT
TORMENT AS, WITH A
GESTURE, GALACTUS
RECONSTITUTES HIS
COSMIC CONVERTER...

...AND BEGINS
TO FEED.



THEN, LIKE AN ASHAMED
CHILD CAUGHT IN A LIE,
THE PHOENIX FLEES.

GALACTUS
SEEMS NOT
TO NOTICE...



...YET, DEEP WITHIN HIS
ANCIENT BEING, AN EMOTION
AKIN TO BORROW MOURN'S
LOST INNOCENCE.

FOR HE, ABOVE ALL, HAS
REASON TO KNOW THAT
THE PHOENIX CAN NEVER
ESCAPE THE GUILT THAT
NOW CONSUMES ITS TOR-
TURED SOUL.

EARTH--BRADDOCK
MANOR...

WIDGET HAS MADE
NINE APPEARANCES TO
DATE. EACH PROGRES-
SIVELY CLEARER AND
MORE FOCUSED--POSSIBLY
AS WE NEAR THE ENCOUNTER
OF WHICH HE WARNS.

WE SHOULD
PREPARE
OURSELVES.

HOW? WE DON'T
KNOW WHAT FORM
THE THREAT WILL
TAKE OR WHERE
IT WILL COME
FROM.

HELLO?

KITTY
THANK GOD!
IT'S ME.

...ALISTAIRE.

I TRACKED DOWN
THE ELECTRONIC
FINGERPRINT COLONEL
FURY GAVE US--I
KNOW WHO FRAMED
ALISTAIRE... BUT
THEY'RE AFTER ME.

SLOW DOWN,
ALISTAIRE. TELL
ME WHERE YOU
ARE.

IN LIVERPOOL--
I'VE INFILTRATED
THE HEADQUARTERS
OF THE R.C.X. IT'S
UNDER A DERELICT
CHURCH...

...SAINT
OSWALD'S--
I--ER?

WAK

DUNK!

ALISTAIRE,
WHAT'S HAPPENING--
ALISTAIRE?!

NEXT ISSUE: OF BIRTH
DEATH AND THE CON-
FUSED, RAINFALL BIT IN
BETWEEN.

Sword Strokes

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP
387 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10016

TERRY KAVANAGH
EDITOR
MARK POWERS
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Attention correspondents: if you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

Dear Terry and Mark,

Re: EXCALIBUR #56. You know what was even more astonishing than finding out that a supporting character you liked actually died, and it wasn't a hoax, or a dream, etc.?

It's the sudden realization that to actually die, a character has to be rendered by a writer-artist in a way that we can actually believe he/she is alive to begin with.

That's something the creators of EXCALIBUR have done from the very first issue with every single character that has played a role in the story so far. These men and women are not disposable, one-dimensional, or fake. So you made me care for them, so sue me.

Waitamint. Does that imply that I care for a guy who can imitate any given sound? Guess so. On second thought, don't sue me, but if you could give me the number of a good psychiatrist...

Dietmar Oath
Bresgauer Str. 66
78 Frieburg
Germany

How about a very good psychiatrist, Dietmar? No, really, we're honored that you feel the presence of these characters so strongly — we must be doing something right!

Dear Terry and Mark,

Re: #56. I LOVE IT! I love the way you drew how Jamie sees the world. (Now we know why he's screwed in the head.) I have only one demand: show more of Meggan's past! Please?

So until Brian uses his brain instead of his brawn, Make Mine Marvel!

Daniel Hazard Jr.
3147 S. California St.
Milwaukee, WI 53207

But, Daniel, we did show you Meggan's own search for her past — now you know as much as she does! Guess you'll just have to stay tuned!

Dear Sword Strokes,

Issue #56 was the best issue in all creation next to issues #50 and #13 (yes, I love issue #13 — do you have a problem with that?). In my first letter to you, I asked all these questions about how could Sat-Yr-9 have been on Earth if Captain UK arrested her. Needless to say, you never printed my letter, leaving me in a quandary. But, in issue #56, you finally came through! Alan, you're a genius, and I thank you for finally making sense of everything.

What really matters is that Alan is back. This is really his comic. Meggan and Brian were characters that he thought of out of his own mind, and the way he handles Kitty and Kurt, I already consider them his characters. I have Alan to thank for coming back and making the first comic I ever collected my favorite once again.

So, until Alan Davis tries to leave again, Make Mine Marvel...no...Make Mine EXCALIBUR!

Jeff Macoubbin
40 Fullerton Heights Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21236

Hey, Jeff, have we ever let you down?
You can count on us!

Dear Sword Strokes,

Phoenix
Bird of fire
Evolved higher
From the ashes
Fire flashes
Corruption of the soul
Being one but never whole
Rage of a fiery sun
Two beings turned to one
Sacrificed for the sake of all
Falling a final fall
Not even a spark lies within
And Phoenix will never rise again

Dory Runnower
P.O. Box 1005
Forestville, CA 95436

Nicely written, Dory...but this very issue, Phoenix resurfaces — and the universe itself will never be the same.

Dear Terry,

On recent EXCALIBUR covers it seems that with the departure of Phoenix and the arrival of Kylon and Cerise, the team no longer fits in the corner box! I think it would be great if you replaced the mug shots with the crossed swords which used to form the "X" in the old logo.

Matthew Pearson
44 Lavinia Rd
Gosport, Hants
United Kingdom PO12 3PA

You'll be happy to hear, Matthew, that Alan Davis also noticed the corner box shuffle, and is currently designing a new one!

Dear Sword Strokes,

I have a not-so-slight discrepancy to report. In issues #55 and #56, the Brigadier of the Weird Happenings Organization was Alysdene Stuart. This name is not consistent with what she has been called in several earlier issues: Alysdene Stuart.

I am not really certain which one is the real spelling, and no reason for the misnomer readily pops into my mind. It all seems academic anyway, now that she is dead, but I would like to know for the sake of continuity. Who really knows how these things happen, maybe the Watcher does, but if so — he isn't telling anyone.

Derek E. Wright
14022 Old Dayton Pike
Sale Creek, TN 37373

Oh, gee, Derek (and all the many other readers who noticed this), Alysdene is her name — she was just spelling it wrong in earlier issues!

Dear Sword Strokes,

Greetings from Up North, guys!
This is only the second time I've written to a comic in the five years I've been collecting. When EXCALIBUR was first born, it was a fresh, fun and fantastic work of writing, art, editing, etc. When, in a burst of beautiful art-

work and talent, Alan returned, EXCALIBUR did the impossible. It got even better. Issues #42-45 were hilarious, #40 & #50 were deansing, the rest were informative, but the best comic ever read by these eyes o' mine was EXCALIBUR #55. The suspense was better than...than...anything! I was on the edge of my seat, literally, muttering to myself "I can't believe it" through the whole issue.

Next, the only time I didn't mind Alan Davis disappearing, the stunning issue #57. Joe Madureira's incredible pencils were reminiscent of the Great Art Adams. Never have I seen the Captain look cooler, or Nightcrawler more...Nightcrawler-ish.

I highly recommend teaming Alan Davis & Joe Madureira for spectacular visual treats in the future, if not permanently. Keep up the amazing work, and until Nightcrawler dyes his hair...all of it...Make Mine Marvel!

Jason P. Arnold
30 Hollybrook St.
Frederick, N.B.
Canada E3A 4N7

Joe's pencils were a big hit with many readers, Jason! Read on!

Dear Sword Strokes,

Re: #55-57

As for issues #55 and #56, There's not much to say, but they were fabulous! Alan Davis never lets me down with his artwork and his writing wasn't bad either. Shadowcat was actually fighting! She was actually using hand-to-hand combat against the enemy. All that martial arts she gained when she was possessed by Ogun finally paid off, and I loved every minute of it!

As for what happened to Courtney Ross, that was truly sad. I always knew that wasn't the true Courtney, but I always thought that when Sat-Yr-9 replaced her, Courtney was sent to Sat-Yr-9's dimension. I never thought she murdered Courtney. The truth hurts, I guess, and Katherine learned the hard way. Even though it wasn't Courtney who betrayed her, Katherine thought she found a friend she could trust and it turned out to all be a lie. The truth really hurts!

Now for issue #57. Who is this artist? Arthur Adams's twin? Joe Rubinstein I'm familiar with, but I've never heard of Joe Madureira. All I can say is it will be a name I won't forget!

Now, it's about time! The real X-Men! Of course, it wasn't the real X-Men without Storm and Jean Grey, but I'll do. I wasn't surprised by Cat's reaction, but Kurt's was so hollow and bitter like he was hurt or something worse. I can't wait for the conclusion! Hurry, please!

Richard Olney
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We'd bet you weren't disappointed, Richard! But more on #57 and #58 next Sword Strokes!

NEXT ISSUE: Excalibur vs. the R.C.X. — while Phoenix faces her future...